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The Holy Guardian Angel: Exploring the Sacred Magick of Abramelin the Mage

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Behold, I send an Angel before you, to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Beware of Him, and obey His voice; provoke Him not, for He will not pardon thy transgressions; for My Name is in Him. But, if thou shalt indeed obey His voice, and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy unto your enemies, and an adversary unto your adversaries. [Exodus 23: 20-23]

Today we shall meet the Holy Guardian Angel. Many teachers from various spiritual paths stress the importance of this mysterious being, while each of them tend to mean something different by the term. In many cases, folks are just referring to a kind of Angelic bodyguard that keeps one (especially children) out of harm's way. In other instances, it is treated as a kind of metaphorical construct for deeper spiritual truths- an embodiment of all that is good about a person. Students of modern Western occultism might be most familiar with the equation of the Holy Guardian Angel and one's own Higher Self. It is my hope that this essay will help make some sense of the whole confusing matter.

In particular, we are going to explore an obscure magickal text from the late 1600s entitled *The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage* (hereinafter called the *Book of Abramelin*). This small booklet- available in any bookstore or online (Dover Publishing ISBN 0-486-2311-5.)- reveals a ritual procedure by which a spiritual aspirant might prepare for, invoke, and bond with his Holy Guardian Angel. S.L. Mathers translated the book from a French copy in the late 19th century, and since then the Holy Guardian Angel has disseminated into many areas of modern Western mysticism. While some aspirants have eschewed the Judeo-Christian spiritual philosophy within the text, the concept of the Holy Guardian Angel and the vital importance of gaining contact with this entity have had a tremendous influence upon Hermeticism, Rosicrucianism, and even Neopaganism.

Establishing contact with the Guardian Angel is supposed to be a hazardous undertaking, for the aspirant is attempting to invoke the very Voice of God into his or her life. Yet, on top of this, the book further promises that- having gained the cooperation of the Holy Guardian Angel- the aspirant can continue onward to establish control over all the spirits of nature and hell. Needless to say, the *Book of Abramelin* has been the stuff of Lovecraftian-style fable, and urban legends are easy to find surrounding the text. To attempt the magick and fail (and thus go insane) is only one of the most famous pitfalls. The talismans in the back of the book, they say, tend to work of their own accord. Just owning a copy of the text, we are told, can attract spiritual unrest or even hostile demons to your household!

Thankfully, few of these dark legends about owning, studying, or using the book turned out to be true. Therefore, we are free to explore the subject of Abramelin and the Holy Guardian Angel (or "HGA") from several different perspectives. First, we will take a look into the *Book of Abramelin*- its history, contents, and a brief analysis of the Abramelin Rite itself. Then, we're going to step backward in time to explore the concept of the Guardian- from the most ancient spirit teachers and Patron Gods to the Genius or Daemon of Platonic philosophy. This will lead us into some discussion about classical Gnostic philosophy and how it bears upon the concept of the Holy Guardian Angel. Finally, I will offer another brief analysis of the HGA concept- this time using the Qabalah most familiar to my fellow students of Western mysticism.

The Book of Abramelin

The history of the *Book of Abramelin* is both fascinating and mysterious. In 1898, occultist and translator S.L. Mathers stumbled across the manuscript in the Library of the Arsenal, Paris, France. It was in French, but claimed to have been translated from a Hebrew original that dated back to 1458. Mathers places the French translation at the end of the seventeenth or beginning of the eighteenth centuries.

Modern scholarship has yet to solve the mysteries of the book's true origins. First of all, the French manuscript cited by Mathers in his edition has vanished from the Library of the Arsenal. (English translations, however, do remain.) Some have reported that the Library claims no such manuscript ever existed- leading many to label Mathers a fraud who "translated" his book from a copy already in English! However, this theory is highly doubtful. More recently, researchers have reported from the Library that the manuscript is merely lost or stolen. In fact, many such manuscripts were lost in a fire that broke out there early last century.

Even more mystery surrounds the contents of the book, and what they have to say about when and by whom the book was created. The supposed name of the author is "Abraham of Worms" or "Abraham the Jew" (likely a pseudonym with symbolic relation to the father of Judaism). He was a physician, Qabalist, magus, and political advisor to such men as Emperor Sigismund of Germany (1368-1437 CE). However, for the last century, literary scholars have doubted the book could have been written in the late 1400s. For instance, one might note the similarities between Abraham's autobiography (given in the first part of the *Book of Abramelin*) and the *Fama Fraternalis* published in 1614. If Mathers' French translation were actually the original, even it was only dated to the late 1600s.

Equally dubious were "Abraham's" claims of being Jewish. There are many inconsistencies in the text that point to a Christian author. For instance, the numbering from the Vulgate Bible is given for Psalms, and there are references to the Apostles, St. John, and several Catholic prayers. The Christian holy day of Easter is mentioned (rather than the Jewish Passover), and the Talismans given in the book include such names as "Lucifer" and other demons from Christian mysticism. Not only this, but the *Book of Abramelin* resembles no known Jewish mystical text - such as the *Zohar* or *Sepher Yetzirah*. (Nor has there ever been a Hebrew version of the manuscript found.) Instead, it resembles (in parts) the Christian grimoires and exorcism handbooks of the medieval period. The mythology presented in the rhetoric of the book (including Lucifer's rebellion in heaven, etc) also strikes me as more Christian than Judaic.

This would all seem to make perfect sense. After all, it was common for Christian grimoires (such as the *Key of Solomon* and the *Goetia*) to claim both Jewish authorship and false antiquity. Since Mathers released his edition into the West, *Abramelin* has been considered just another example of the same. Yet, somewhat recently, the plot has thickened! A researcher by the name of Georg Dehn discovered yet another version of the text- this one older than the French!- written in German.

The French/English translation of *Abramelin* bears some striking differences from the older German. First of all, the French translator systematically reduced the length of the magickal Rite- from one and a half years to merely six months. The French version is also described as much less elaborate, is missing an entire portion of the original text, and a large number of its Talismans are incomplete. More importantly to our discussion here, at least some of the Christian references I mentioned above are not found in the German. (I.e.- the reference to "Easter" in the French was originally to "Passover" in the German.) While this does not prove that Abraham was Jewish, it throws some very reasonable doubt upon the theories surrounding the French version. Now, it is just as likely that Abraham was indeed a Jew, and the Christian bias of the text imparted by the unknown French translator. At this point we cannot be certain.

Mr. Dehn's research has led him to believe the author of the *Book of Abramelin* is exactly what he claims. This is likely because he found a historical personage who fits the description of Abraham the Jew- Rabbi Jacob ben Moses Moln (ca 1365-1427). He lived in approximately the same time period claimed by *Abramelin's* author, had a similar education and career, and even a "missing period" in his life that would match the period described in Abraham's autobiography. If this is our man, then it follows that "Abraham of Worms" is merely a symbolic pseudonym for the Rabbi.

However, the enigma doesn't end here! Mr. Dehn also tells us that he has discovered- in a library in the town of Wolfenbützel- a copy of the *Book of Abramelin* dating to 1608. If this is true, the implications are staggering! It would mean that the *Fama Fraternitatis* (published in Germany in 1614) either borrowed its story from the autobiography of Abraham the Jew, or both of these tales were borrowed from some earlier undiscovered source. In my own opinion, it makes some sense that the tale of Christian Rosencreutz would have originally been a tale of a "wandering Jew" (symbolic of the Diaspora)- later adapted by the Rosicrucians to star a Christian in its principal role.

Mr. Dehn's work is already available in German, and an English translation is on its way. (Edition Araki Publishing - ISBN 3-936149-00-3) This will greatly expand our understanding of Abramelin, its origins, and its place in Western spirituality.

However, for the last century, it has been the Mathers translation of the French version that has been loved, feared and misunderstood throughout the West. Therefore, without further delay, we shall explore the text as S.L. Mathers presents it.

The *Book of Abramelin* is divided into three sub-books. The first is the autobiography of Abraham the Jew. He describes his years of questing for the True and Sacred Wisdom, and his several disappointments along the way. (Here are shades of the tale of Christian Rosencreutz in the *Fama Fraternitatis*.) He learns several forms of magick, but finds them all lacking, and their practitioners to be less than they claimed. At the last moments before giving up the quest, Abraham meets an Egyptian adept named Abramelin, who agrees to teach Abraham the Sacred Magick.

Abraham wrote this text for the sake of his younger son Lamech (another Biblically-inspired name). According to the story, Abraham had- in the tradition of Judaism- granted the mysteries of the Qabalah to his oldest son. However, he did not wish to leave Lamech with no key to spiritual attainment, and thus Abraham left behind the *Book of Abramelin*. This first book ends with the father instructing the son on what kind of life he must lead if he completes the Operation, how the True and Sacred magick should be properly employed.

The second two books, then, are composed of the instructions for the Sacred Magick, which Abraham claims to have copied by hand from Abramelin's original. The first part (book two of the trilogy) describes a heavily involved procedure of purification and invocation, resulting in the appearance of one's own Guardian Angel.

Abraham also spends some time in book two explaining his own philosophies about magick. This is where the text warns against using any other grimoire, sigils or barbarous names of invocation. In one chapter (Book II, Ch. 6), he relates a wonderful alternative to Solomonic magickal hours in detail.

The purifications take the standard grimoiric forms of seclusion, fasting, cleanliness, and a heavy dose of prayer. A separate room- called an Oratory (prayer room) must be maintained in utmost purity during a six month period, as this is where the Angel will appear and bond with the aspirant at the end of this time. Afterward, the Angel takes over as Teacher for the aspirant, and it is from this being (and only this being) that the True and Sacred Wisdom and Magick is discovered.

Once the cooperation of the Angel is assured, one continues to summon forth such demonic princes as Lucifer, Leviathan, Astarot, Belzebud, and several others (twelve in all). These beings are commanded to deliver an Oath of obedience to the mage, as well as the use of four familiar spirits for day-to-day practical tasks.

The third and final book is a collection of magick-square talismans, which the demonic princes and spirits must swear upon when giving their Oaths. Each talisman can then be used to command a spirit to perform a task, in much the same fashion as those in the *Key of Solomon the King*. The functions of the talismans are those common to grimoiric material- finding treasure, causing visions, bringing books, flight, healing the sick, etc, etc.

The magick squares provided by this text are often mistaken as *Goetia*-style Seals, where the mere presence of the talismans equals the presence of the spirits themselves. This has led to urban legend-style stories of the “dangers” posed by the possession of the talismans- or even possession of the book itself. However, there is nothing of signatures or Seals about these talismans. Only rarely are the letters of the Abramelin squares formed into recognizable names, and then they are not always the names of the spirits who are actually associated with the talisman. They are only like the *Goetia* in that the spirits are bound to the squares- but this only occurs *after* the six month operation. On their own, the talismans seem quite inert and harmless.

In fact, it might be possible to suggest the talismans provided in *Abramelin* are actually useless. The first clue comes with the fact that Book II provides a long list of the spirits which Abraham the Jew bound by his own performance of the operation, yet Book III states that each aspirant should demand from the Princes a list of personalized spirits. The talismans given in the text are specifically associated with the list of spirits already provided. Theoretically, if one receives his own list of spirits, one should also receive his own book of talismans to go with them.

The second clue is provided by the state of Book III itself. While the first two parts of the work are generally consistent and well (if obscurely) written, Book III persistently shows forth errors, omissions, and outright contradictions. I’ve seen it suggested that Book III was a later addition to the text- written in an obviously different style, and with an obviously different (goetic) intent, from the rest of the Celestial-aimed Operation. It could even be that Book III was added to the work as a blind (to divert the attention of the curious), or even as a kind of bait to lure would-be aspirants who might otherwise pass over the book for more popular *Goetia*-style operations. Perhaps, we might consider these talismans as mere examples of what Abraham the Jew received from his Guardian Angel for his own personal use. As the *Book of Abramelin* stresses again and again, the Holy Guardian Angel will instruct one in all necessary areas after contact is made- making anything written in the operation past that point tentative and exemplary at best.

The Abramelin Operation

In this section, I will outline the Abramelin Operation as it is presented in *The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage*. While I have passed over some details (such as specific Psalms, etc), I do believe this is the first time the Operation has been outlined in its original form since Mathers’ publication over a century ago. (There are no inclusions from the Golden Dawn or Thelema in what follows.)

Abramelin has a very detailed chapter on the creation of the Oratory, found in Book II, chapter 11 (Concerning the Selection of the Place). It first suggests one erect it in a natural setting, if you happen to live in the country. It should be in a “small wood,” or (one might assume) a small clearing completely enclosed by trees. The Altar is erected in the center of the clearing, built of “stones which have never been worked or hewn, or even touched by the hammer.” (See Exodus 20:25, Deuteronomy 27:5, I Kings 6:7)

Abramelin continues its instruction for the wooded Oratory by building a shelter (tent or tabernacle) of "fine branches" over the Altar to protect it from rain (i.e.- for when the Lamp and Censor are burning). Surrounding the Altar at a distance of seven paces one must plant a "hedge of flowers, plants, and green shrubs." If these are high enough, they would provide better privacy than the surrounding trees alone. In any case, they serve to divide the space into an outer area and an inner Holy of Holies (the shelter and Altar). The general idea behind this arrangement can be found in scripture at Exodus 26, where Yahweh instructs Moses in the construction of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, and includes the separation of the Holy of Holies with a veil.

Of course, few people will have the luxury to establish such a wonderful natural Oratory. Abramelin accounts for this and offers an "urban" alternative. This Oratory needs only be an apartment (room) with a north-facing window leading to a balcony or terrace. The floor and walls should be made of (or covered in) white pine. A Lamp that burns (preferably olive-) oil should be hung from the ceiling or placed upon the Altar. The terrace (used for summoning earth-bound spirits) is covered in pure river sand of "two fingers depth at least."

The Altar in this case is not made of stones, but is a hollow wooden cabinet (perhaps made of pine after the walls and floor) for the storing of the magickal tools. Upon the Altar must be a silver or brass Censor, and a brass tray to hold charcoal and excess ashes. ONLY the tray may leave the Oratory at any time- in order to dispose of the ashes in some pure place such as a garden.

The bulk of the magickal tools are secluded within the Altar cabinet during the six months of preparation. (Most of them come into play only during the final seven days- which is the Rite of Abramelin proper.) Here we find the magickal vestments: a white linen Robe used to approach the Angel, and an additional red silk over-robe, white silk girdle, and a white and gold silk crown (like a filet) used for commanding the lower spirits. There is also included a set of funerary garments- consisting of a robe of sackcloth (called a robe of mourning) and two silk veils (black and white).

All of the talismans from Book III (assuming one should use them at all) are supposed to be drawn beforehand and stored within the Altar. Interestingly, Abramelin makes no use of consecrated pens, inks, or papers. In Book II, chapter 20, the author insists that drawing the symbols clearly with any pen and ink- so that the operations intended by each is not obscured- will suffice. (This is only one such pointed departure the author takes from typical grimoiric literature- the bulk of which he feels to be false and vain.)

Regardless of the talismans, the primary tool used to command the spirits is a Wand made of almond-tree wood. This likely arises from Numbers 17, where a branch of almond wood miraculously sprouted blossoms, and thus established Moses' brother Aaron as the High Priest of Israel, chosen by God.

It is also necessary to make a blank Talisman from a square of silver. This is wrapped in white silk and stored with the other tools in the Altar. The meaning of this odd Silver Talisman is obscure. However, the text makes it clear that it belongs in some way to the Guardian Angel, and it may even serve as a kind of scrying mirror. My own impression is that- mirror or no- it is intended to facilitate the connection between human and Angel.

This connection is also greatly assisted by the final two items found upon the Altar- the Holy Oil and Incense . (Their recipes are found in Book II, chapter 11.) The Incense is employed for all purposes from the invocation of the Guardian Angel to the conjuration of the infernal spirits. Like many aspects of the Abramelin system, the perfume is derived from Biblical authority. Exodus 30 contains a recipe given by Yahweh to Moses for the composition of the Perfume for use in the Tabernacle. One can compare this with the recipe given in the *Book of Abramelin*:

One part of Incense in Tears (Olibanum, Frankincense), one-half part of Stacte (Storax, Benzoin), and one-quarter part Lignum-aloes (or Cedar, Rose Petals, or Citron). Reduce all of these to a fine powder (or purchase them as such and mix them thoroughly), and keep the result in a sealed container.

I would advise against simply purchasing "Abramelin Incense," since such perfumes rarely contain the actual ingredients as listed in the grimoire.

There is also a Holy Anointing Oil prescribed by Yahweh in Exodus 30, which was intended to consecrate the Priesthood, and all of the vessels, tools, implements, and furnishings of the Tabernacle. As with the Holy Perfume above, we can easily compare the similarities between the Biblical original and Abramelin's version:

One part Myrrh (in resin form). Two parts fine Cinnamon. One-half part Galangal. And half the total weight of these drugs of the best olive oil. Mix together according to the Art of the Apothecary to make a balsam (ointment) and keep in a glass vial.

The mention of the "Art of the Apothecary" in the creation of the Holy Oil is likely a reference to an aspect of the alchemical arts- by which essential oils are extracted from plant matter. It is acceptable to purchase all of the above ingredients in an essential oil form, and mix them according to the directions. Again, beware of ready-made Abramelin Oil, as it may or may not include the proper ingredients.

Typical of the ritual outlined in grimoiric literature, the *Book of Abramelin* employs a regimen of cumulative abstinence and ceremony. The requirements are few in the first phase of the Rite, but they increase in number and complexity as the aspirant progresses. Abramelin is perhaps the best of all examples, because its process is extended over a daunting six month period. (Other grimoires may require as little as a month or just nine days.) Dedication to such a lengthy period of purification really does bring about drastic changes in one's lifestyle and habitual patterns.

The first two months impose no major restrictions other than an attempt to live purely, honestly, serenely, and moderately. One is told to "seek retirement as far as possible." As for ceremonial procedure, one needs only to enter the Oratory twice a day- once in the morning and once in the evening. Each time, a confession is uttered, followed by a prayer to the Highest- the structure of each left completely to the discretion of the aspirant. For six days of the week, nothing else is required in the way of ritual. Only on the Sabbath day (Saturday or Sunday) must one light the Lamp and burn Incense upon the Altar. This represents the extent of the first two months' difficulty. Procedural mistakes are hard to make, and this leaves these months open for adjustment to the new lifestyle.

For the second two months, the ceremonial procedure increases to a certain degree. One must fast every Friday night (the Sabbath Eve), wash with purified water before entering the Oratory at dawn and dusk, and generally prolong the prayers themselves. The isolation continues as before, and the aspirant is told: "Only it is absolutely necessary to retire from the world and seek retreat." At this point, most of the novice mistakes will have been made and corrected, and one will have faced and dealt with a good number of heretofore unconscious habits. More than anything, the novelty of the entire affair will have worn away, and the aspirant will be reaching a point of mental exhaustion.

The final two months switch the Operation into high gear- involving a lot more formal ritual.. A third prayer (at noon) is added to the daily regimen- each time washing in pure water, donning the White Robe, and kindling the lamp and incense. As well, a second prayer is added to each session- this one to the Guardian Angel. If it is at all possible, the aspirant must cease to work- or to leave the home for nearly any reason. He is told to "shun all society except that of your Wife and of your Servants" and that "ye shall quit every other matter only permitting your recreation to consist in things Spiritual and

Divine." The aspirant is told to avoid sexual stimulation like the plague, and is likewise barred from performing any magickal work (except for healing).

All of this gives the aspirant much more to concentrate upon, resulting in a heightened mental focus. It tends to occupy the aspirant totally, and the increased isolation can induce new mental stress. Fortunately, if one has overcome the exhaustion felt in the second two months- literally passing through it rather than retreating- this stage of the Operation can produce a second wind.

After these six months of slowly increasing restriction and purification, the Abramelin Rite proper- by which permanent contact with the Guardian Angel is established- takes place over a seven day period. These days are extremely intense- including total seclusion (even separating from one's family), heavy fasting, hours of prayer, very specific magickal tools and procedures, and the summoning of several classes of spiritual entities. All of the preparations undertaken in the previous six months have served to induce an altered state of consciousness- the stresses and exhaustion establishing the necessary mental condition for the ego-death to follow.

The seven days are divided into one, three, and three. That is- one day for the consecration of everything necessary to perform the magick, three days for the "convocation of the good and holy spirits" (where the HGA is invoked), and three days for the "convocation of the evil spirits" (where the earth-bound and infernal spirits are bound).

The first day is the Day of Consecration. One is to enter the Oratory almost as usual- though with two exceptions. First, one is instructed to enter with bare feet, and to never wear shoes in the Oratory again. (This is likely due to the Divine injunction given to Moses in Exodus: "Put thy shoes off thy feet, for the ground upon which thou standest is holy." Exodus 3:5) Secondly, one is not to don the White Robe.

Instead, the White Robe is placed upon the Altar- along with the Red Robe, Girdle, Crown, and the Wand of Almond. Kneeling at the Altar with the Holy Oil in hand, a long prayer is recited asking for the Divine to touch and consecrate both the aspirant himself and his magickal tools. As before, the composition of this oration is left up to the aspirant. It is followed by the anointing of the aspirant, all of the items on the Altar and the Altar itself with the Holy Oil. Finally, the usual two prayers are recited before leaving the Oratory, and nothing more is required on this day.

The second day is the first day of the invocation of the Angel. This is where the funerary symbolism of the Rite comes into play. At dawn, one is not to wash or don the White Robe, but instead must put on the Robe of Mourning. Once inside, ashes are taken from the Censor and placed upon one's head (a funeral custom found in Biblical literature- such as the Book of Job), and a black veil is placed over the head and face.

Now, the Abramelin Rite employs a small child (between six and eight years of age) as a scryer at this point in the process. As shocking as this may sound at first, we have to keep in mind that child clairvoyants are no strangers to the grimoiric traditions. As should be clear from Biblical literature, a small child is the epitome of the Christian concept of spiritual purity- just what the grimoires insist is necessary to communicate with Angelic beings. Also, children yet lack the boundaries to the imagination from which adults suffer, making them much better potential clairvoyants.

Today's cultural environment might make the service of a child scryer problematic. However, the reasoning behind the instruction is sound. The aspirant- still in sackcloth and ashes- is in no state of

childlike purity or imagination. Thus, Abramelin employs the child (for this one session only!) to see and hear the Angel that may be invisible to the aspirant himself.

The child is placed at the Altar before the Silver Lamen, and a white silk veil (similar to the black one worn by the aspirant) is placed over his or her head and face. The aspirant- clad for his own funeral- is to lay prostrate at the door of the Oratory and recite Psalms and prayers without looking even once upon the Altar. He is to pray for the appearance of the Angel, and for the Angel to communicate any last-minute instructions to the Child.

The text implies the Silver Lamen is used to scry this information. After the Angel has departed, the Child is to bring the Lamen to the aspirant, and- once the aspirant has looked into it himself- return it to the Altar. Then, both leave the Oratory and the aspirant is to remain in complete solitude and silence for the rest of the day. (Presumably because he is now ceremonially dead.)

Day three (the second of the convocation of the good spirits) continues the funeral rite. At dawn, one enters the Oratory as in the previous day, wearing the same Robe of Mourning. Now, the aspirant must lay prostrate upon the floor, with his head at the foot of the Altar, and pray silently for three hours or more. This is the symbolic "laying within the tomb" found in many solar Dying and Rising God mythos. (Such as the crucifixion of Jesus and his three days in the tomb.)

This procedure is repeated again for an hour at noon, and then again in the evening. This is also the time one would implement any instructions given by the Angel on the previous day. While one is not promised a vision of the Angel at this time, it is said that the splendor of the Angel's presence will surround the Altar throughout the rest of the day.

The fourth day of the seven (the third and final day of the convocation of the good spirits) progresses from the death symbolism of the previous two days into the rebirth half of the equation. Here at last the White Robe is worn once more- symbolic of the resurrection and spiritual purity of the aspirant. (The donning of a white robe at the end of such an initiation is found as far back as ancient Egypt.) One is to kneel at the Altar and begin to offer prayers of thanks to the Highest as well as invocations to the Guardian Angel. If all has gone well, it is here the first tentative contact with the Angel will be achieved.

Abramelin promises literal fireworks on this great day- as if full Knowledge and Conversation with the Guardian Angel will have suddenly been achieved. I can't say that I agree. In fact, I would warn any aspirant not to expect much at all. Both the Angel and the initiate will be all but exhausted by this process, and there are still three days of hard work to go to complete the Rite.

Yet, our author Abraham the Jew claims to have had pretty impressive visions, and assures us the Angel will communicate: all of one's blessings and sins; instructions on how one should be living; the True Wisdom and Sacred Magick; where one erred in the Operation; and a covenant to defend the aspirant his entire life, in return for the aspirant's promise to always bide the Angel's instructions. (Personally, I would not expect to resolve any of these issues before the next several years!)

Along with this, the Angel is supposed to give instruction (if needed) on how to conjure the spirits in the following three days, including the revelation of any further talismans necessary for the conjurations. One is also encouraged to ask the Angel- once only- for enough money upon which to live for the rest of one's life. As we can see from all of this, the job of the Angel on this final day (and for the rest of the aspirant's life!) is to reveal one's True Will- the proper direction his life should be taking.

This brings us to the fifth day of the Rite- which is the first day of the convocation of the evil (and earth-bound) spirits. Now the aspirant must fast completely for the next three days. He should prepare and enter the Oratory as is usual- this time donning not just the White Robe, but the Red Over-Robe, the White Silk Girdle and the White and Gold Silk Filet as well. Prayers are recited to the Highest and to the Guardian Angel for aid in the following work, and then the Almond Wand is taken into hand and the exorcisms begin.

On this day, the four chief Princes of Hell- Lucifer, Leviathan, Satan, and Belial- are summoned upon the river sand on the terrace. From them the aspirant must demand a list of servient spirits who are best matched to one's personal psychology and practical needs. (This list of spirits will be those governed directly by the Four Princes and the Talismans associated with them. Of course, this list should be different from that offered by Abraham at the end of the second book.) Finally, an Oath of Loyalty is demanded from the Princes- which is sworn upon the authority vested within the consecrated Almond Wand.

The next day (the sixth of the seven, and the second of the convocation of the evil spirits), the same procedure is repeated to summon the Four Princes. Then, eight Sub-Princes- Astarot, Magot, Asmodee, Belzebud, Oriens, Paimon, Arition, and Amaimon- are called onto the terrace. (This total of 12 Princes is likely in reference to the Zodiac, and the final four- Oriens to Amaimon- are the traditional spirits of the four cardinal directions.)

The same demands are made of these Eight as were made of the first Four- a list of servient spirits (ruled specifically by the Eight Sub-Princes) and an Oath of Loyalty. Further, Abramelin tells us to demand of the four Princes of the cardinal directions the names of four Familiar Spirits who are destined for the servitude of the aspirant. After this, the entities are sent away again and the aspirant exits the Oratory.

Now, at long last, the final day of the Rite has arrived- being the third day of the convocation of the evil spirits. Once again the procedures are the same for the exorcism of the twelve Princes of Hell. Then, they are commanded to bring all of the servient spirits they listed for you in the previous days, including the four Familiar Spirits. The spirits are then addressed in groups based on which Prince or Princes rule over them, and they must swear Oaths of Loyalty upon the Talismans they will respond to later.

Even the Familiars are bound to a set of Talismans- found in *Abramelin* Book III, chapter five, "How we may retain the Familiar Spirits bond or free in whatsoever form." This consists of twelve talismans intended to bind the familiars in various illusory shapes. Some of the shapes are an Old Man, a Soldier, a Page, or even a Flower. However, the majority of the talismans serve to bind the Familiars into the shapes of animals- such as a Lion, Eagle, Dog, Bear, Serpent, or Ape. This would seem to be a survival of the shamanic practice of keeping Familiars in animal form- which is closest to such spirits' inherent nature.

Each Familiar has its own natural time of operation- depending on the course of the Sun. The first Familiar remains on "guard duty" with his master from dawn until noon; at which point the second Familiar takes its shift from noon to dusk. The third Familiar then operates from dusk until midnight, leaving the fourth to guard from midnight until dawn. This solar rotation of the Familiars' shifts reflect the four quadrants of the horoscope: East/dawn, South/noon, West/dusk and North/midnight. This further indicates that the Familiars are likely of a directional or even Elemental nature. Thus, for the aspirant, the four Familiar Spirits plus the Guardian Angel constitute a pentagonal mastery of the Elemental Forces (Earth, Air, Water, Fire, and Spirit).

After the Rite is ended, there are just a few instructions for finishing up. If the Oratory is to be dismantled, the river sand must be removed from the terrace and thrown in some hidden place. (NOT a river or the navigable sea.) If the Oratory is left intact (even if it is packed away), it can be used later for further communication with the Guardian Angel. The Sabbath is suggested as the best time for such invocation.

Also, the new initiate must continue to fast after the Operation for another three days. For seven days, he is instructed to do no servile work and to give his time to prayers of thanks and blessing unto the Highest for granting such a gift. In no way should the Sacred Magick be put into use during these seven days of rest. After that, it is ordained that one help others as much as possible with one's new-found power- else it will depart forever.

Further rules for using the magick follow the Operation in Book II, chapter 20- in the form of a long list categorized by numbers. Interestingly, I have never once heard a student ask about or refer to this list- and this is a shame because it clearly answers many of the most common questions about the Abramelin system. Perhaps what has hidden it from public view for so long is the fact that it does purport to be a list of rules to follow after completing the Operation. Because the Angel, and not the Book of Abramelin, is to instruct one in all necessary points afterward, these rules are likely overlooked as superfluous. Yet, the secret is that the list also contains rules to follow during and even before the Operation. Here are a few examples:

- Rule 13 instructs the aspirant to read and re-read the Book of Abramelin many times over the space of six months before attempting the Operation. This is done for two reasons. First, because Abraham scattered obscure bits of information throughout the three books, the six months of study are necessary to discover them all. Second, it ensures the aspirant will be well-versed in all of the instructions and procedures before making the attempt. At the same time, we can see how this rule- in its own way- makes the Abramelin Operation a year-long undertaking rather than a mere six moons.

- Rule 15 forbids the aspirant to sleep during the daytime- unless some condition makes it unavoidable. Meanwhile, rule 24 advises against attempting any magick during the nighttime.

- Rule 17 sets the age restrictions of the aspirant between 25 and 50 years.

- Rules 28 and 29 both give information on proper fasting during the Operation.

- Rules 33-35 all concern ritual taboos. During the entire six month process, one must take heed to lose no blood from the body (unless your body expels it naturally), to avoid any contact with a dead body, and to refuse any food that includes the flesh or blood of a dead animal.

- Rule 38 contains instructions for one to read all 72 Psalms of David at least twice each week during the six months.

Of course, these examples do not cover all of the instructions hidden in this list of rules. However, they do highlight those which answer some of the most commonly asked questions about Abramelin.

Plus, as I stated above, similar information is hidden in this way throughout the three books. As just one example, all the way back in book two, chapter 10, Abraham describes many activities that are allowed or disallowed for the entire length of the Operation. (Meditation, prayer and the healing arts are allowed. Magick and sorcery are disallowed.) Thus the vital importance of devouring every word of this grimoire for at least six months before beginning the Rite.

The Mysteries of Abramelin

So, now you have seen the Abramelin Operation in its original form. At this point, we can continue forward and ask: What is going on behind the scenes? What are its foundational philosophies and how does it all work? We've seen some clues already: a shift in lifestyle, mental exhaustion, isolation, and disruption of habitual patterns that all contribute to the necessary altered consciousness and ego-death.

Just as importantly, we have seen some hint of the solar death-rebirth symbolism that spans the three days of the convocation of the good spirits. When we then step back and look at the larger picture of the Operation, we can see the Sun peeking through many subtle cracks in the symbolism.

To begin with, the six-month purification commences on the spring equinox (Easter or Passover) and ends on the autumnal equinox (Feast of Tabernacles). (See Book II, Ch. 5) The equinoxes mark two very specific stations of the waxing and waning Sun throughout the year- when the length of the day and night are equal. At the fall equinox, the merciless Sun of the summertime is finally dethroned- and the days begin to grow shorter as winter deepens. But at the spring equinox, the Sun once again overtakes the darkness- and the days will steadily grow longer and hotter until the Sun begins to wane once more. The Abramelin Rite, then, begins upon the religiously important spring equinox, when the Sun takes the Throne of Heaven and begins to wax in power. It comes to a close when the Sun is slain- and even ends with a Solar funeral.

Notice, too, that the daily observances in the Oratory are based upon the daily course of the Sun from Eastern to Western horizon- dawn, noon, and dusk. In this same vein, I might again mention the rotating shifts of the four Familiar Spirits- as they are based on the four daily "stations" of the Sun around the horoscope. The Lamp is a solar symbol- the embodiment of the Invisible Sun of the Spirit. Even the ingredients for the Holy Incense are attributed Solar correspondences. Sleeping during the day, as well as working magick by night, are forbidden unless absolutely required- as if it is necessary to have the Light of the Sun present in order to work the magick. (In his section on magickal timing, Abraham does insist that a planet only has power when above the horizon.)

The Holy Guardian Angel has traditionally been associated with Solar imagery. The Angel is the direct representative of God in the life of the aspirant, just as the Sun is the representative of God among the Planets. (For instance, the Sun Card of the Tarot can be interpreted as the Guardian Angel watching over His young charge.) Notice, too, how there are twelve Princes of Hell listed in this text, with one Angel to govern them- as if in reflection of the twelve Signs of the Zodiac and the Sun that governs them. (This solar-zodiacal imagery is common- such as the 12 Tribes of Israel and Levi, the 12 Apostles and Jesus, etc. This is the basis for modern associations between the number 13 and the occult.)

The foundational mythos contained within *Abramelin* is similar to that of the *Goetia* and other medieval grimoires. The infernal spirits are said to be the Angels cast upon the earth after Lucifer's failed rebellion. As part of the chastisement for their assault upon God's Throne, they were destined to live among and serve the will of mankind. (There are examples in both Eastern and Western shamanism of helper spirits who are bound to service by negative karma and past misdeeds.) Because of this enforced servitude, says Abraham, these demons menace humans at all opportunities. However, they can be controlled by holy men. To accomplish this, one might be ordained by the Church as an Exorcist. Or, with Abramelin, one could invoke the Holy Guardian Angel for the spiritual authority to command lesser spirits.

Of course, the story of Lucifer's rebellion in heaven is principally Christian. There are parallels that have developed in Jewish and Arabic legend, but these are probably due to influence from the Christian version of the story. Besides this, in the Jewish version, the rebellious Angels did not become demons when cast to Earth. They may be been chastised by God, and set over things wrathful, but they

remained Angels firmly in God's own employ. Jewish demons, meanwhile, are earth-bound creatures like any other- not any more good or bad than a tiger or wolf. (For the most part, they represent common nature spirits. They are called Jinn in Arabic.)

Yet *Abramelin* describes the spirits as both fallen Angels and as lowly demons at the command of Man. While they are obviously spirits of both nature and hell- some of them good and some bad- the text treats them all as if they were infernal. This is a starkly Christian influence. As is common in such classical grimoires, a logical shamanic philosophy has been dressed over with Christian dogma. It creates basic contradictions that simply have to be ignored. In this case, it means that Lucifer, Satan, Leviathan, and Belial rule all of the spirits of both earth and hell- the friendly and the harmful. (This makes them more neutral in their operation, while the text insists they are evil.) One who has become holy by gaining Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel will enjoy the authority of command over all of these.

Finally, while we are still on the subject of the secrets behind the Operation, I want to take the opportunity to bust the most common Abramelin myth:

The Abramelin Operation can not be performed in today's modern world!

Certainly, such a feat would have been possible for a well-off physician and political advisor in medieval Europe. Abraham the Jew could take an extended vacation from work, rent a secluded house in the country, and perform a proper spiritual retreat. However, since we today can not just walk away from work and rent to live like a monk for six months, that rules out Abramelin as an option. This leaves the text as little more than a historical curiosity.

Few people know it, but Abraham the Jew addresses this conflict right in the *Book of Abramelin*:

As regardeth the regimen of your life and actions, ye shall have regard unto your status and condition. If you be your own Master, as far as lieth in your power, free yourself from all your business... Ye shall therefore seek retirement as far as possible... (Book II, Ch. 7, p.67)

Although the best counsel which I can give is that a man should go into retirement in some desert or solitude, until the time of the Six Moons destined unto this Operation be fulfilled... nevertheless now this is hardly possible; and we must accommodate ourselves unto the era (in which we live); and being unable to carry it out in one way, we should endeavour to do so in another; and attach ourselves only unto Divine Things. (Book II, Ch. 10, p.72)

There you have it. Abraham the Jew assures us that he is giving us the Operation in its "best case scenario" version, but that it must be adapted according "to your status and condition." If you do not happen to be your own Master (i.e.- independently wealthy), then continue to work, of course! But it will be straight to work and straight home for six months.

The fact is that the Abramelin process is not so unique to Western spirituality. In fact, it represents a system of initiation that has been known in nearly every culture around the world- from ancient Shamanic practices to the most elaborate Temple Faiths. Just as Abraham suggests concerning Abramelin, the initiation has always adapted itself to the time and place in which it must be performed. For instance, to this very day, the Afro-Cuban faith of Santeria preserves an initiation called "*Ocha*"- during which initiates are bonded directly with their Patron Gods (*Orishas*). Abramelin bears some striking resemblances to this *Ocha* Rite, as well as the many other "versions" of this human-celestial bonding ceremony around the world. Hundreds of men and women undergo *Ocha* every year, and its complexity, length and expense(!) far outweigh anything an aspirant of Abramelin must bear.

The Guardian Angel, From Patron God to Genius

There are mentions of "Guardian Spirits" in written history as far back as ancient Babylon. There are even Sumerian royal seals that depict kings in the protective arms of their Patron Gods. In fact, it was likely in Mesopotamia that our modern concepts about the Holy Guardian Angels were born. However, the Guardian Spirit is not unique to Middle Eastern agricultural civilizations. In fact, a global exploration of tribal shamanic cultures reveals that the idea of the Guardian Spirit may be one of the oldest religious ideas on the planet.

In *Shamanism, Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, Professor Eliade suggests that all categories of Shamans possess helper (familiar) and tutelary (guardian) spirits. The helper spirits are usually earth-bound creatures, at the direct command of the Shaman. The Guardians, on the other hand, tend to be celestial spirits, and are very often Messengers of Father Sky Himself.

In some cases, these tutelary spirits are seen as feminine (or masculine in the case of female Shamans)- and the Shaman is literally married to this spirit during his initiation. Afterward, it is through his new celestial spouse that the Shaman will work his miracles for the rest of the tribe. She- and not other Shamans- will teach him the secrets of magick and healing, and She will provide him with familiar spirits. (A dynamic that has not changed one bit in the *Book of Abramelin*.)

Not only is this entity a companion and teacher for the Shaman, but also a protector. It is because of his Guardian that the Shaman is spear and arrow proof, and why his endeavors are successful. When the Shaman ascends the heavens during his ecstatic trances, it is his Guardian or Spirit Wife who carries him aloft and shows him around. Even more importantly, it is She who will claim his soul at the time of his passing, to carry it home to the stars. For these reasons, it is imperative to develop a real working relationship with the Guardian, and to follow the instructions and lifestyle it dictates.

This brings us back, by way of example, to the subject of Santeria's *Ocha* ceremony- by which an aspiring Santo Priest is bonded with his *Orisha*. *Ocha* is a fair representation of ancient tribal Shamanic initiations. It consists of a seven day ceremony involving the consecration of the new priest and having the *Orisha* "put to his head." This latter concept is very significant. Eliade mentions it in relation to helper spirits- where the Shaman receives one "spirit of the head" whose function is to protect him during ecstatic journeys. (In this we can see a relationship between the "spirit of the head" and the human intelligence- especially the faculties related to dreams, vision, and creativity.)

During *Ocha*, the *Orisha* is believed to literally enter the skull of the aspirant- a physical marriage that makes the celestial and the human being one. (The aspirant must even shave his or her head in order to undergo the process- so that the hair does not hinder the entrance of the *Orisha*.) Afterward, exhausted from the Rite, the *Orisha* enters a phase of hibernation. For an entire year, the aspirant must wear white and never venture out in the dark. He must live a monastic life of purity until, after the year is complete, further sacrifices and ceremonies are used to awaken the *Orisha* and establish the new *Santo*.

Compare this to the Abramelin Rite described above- which simply places the period of purification before the seven day ceremony. In Mathers' version, the aspirant only has to endure six months of such isolation and ritual work. Yet, the original German seems to preserve a full year and a half of the same- making it even closer in spirit to the year-long *Ocha* process. Even the aspect of putting the Guardian to the head is not lost in Abramelin- because the aspirant, during the "convocation of the good spirits", is told to lay with his head at the foot of the Altar for a very long period of time. This Altar is where the Presence of the Angel has been drawn down for many preceding months, and the ritual-death posture taken at this point suggests the Angel is moving into the head/intellect of the aspirant.

Moving back into the Agricultural Era and the Mid-East, we see a further evolution of the Guardian Spirit idea. While the tribal Shaman was exclusive in his ability to marry Celestial Angels, the ancient Sumerians (and possibly the Egyptians) developed the idea that everyone has a personal Patron who can be appealed to in times of need. (This is likely due to the advance of astrology- which provided everyone with their own natal chart, and therefore their own governing Deities.)

Chris Bennet has a good discussion of the Personal God in his essay entitled *When Smoke Gets in My I* (and several other closely related essays). He describes the Patron as a kind of personification of a person's intellect- or capacity for thinking and acting. Specifically, he supposes that mankind's earliest contact with the Divine came via psychoactive drugs that engaged our faculties of higher thinking. (Consciousness, intellect, imagination.) It is very common indeed for visionaries and psychonauts- even using modern laboratory-created chemicals- to establish contacts with apparently objective entities during their trips. Often these entities introduce themselves as protectors and helpers, or at least beings with some interest in the welfare of humankind.

It is doubtful that the tribal Shamans or the ancient Sumerians saw their Patron Deities as "personifications" of anything except raw forces of nature. Yet, the idea did begin to formulate in the minds of later Greek philosophers like Plato. In *The Republic*, Plato relates a rather detailed account of the function served by the Deity:

Upon preparing for re-incarnation, each soul must approach the Spinning Wheel of the Goddesses of Fate (Lachesis, Clotho and Atropos). In Plato's view, the Wheel of Fate is composed of the Zodiac as its outer wheel, and the Planetary Spheres as its inner spokes. Therefore, the Fates who spin, measure, and cut the threads of life upon this Wheel are directly concerned with the influences of the stars upon each individual. First of all, the soul must approach Lachesis, who will give unto it a chosen Personal Deity to be its guide and protector during the next life. This Deity, then, will lead the soul to Clotho (Zodiac) and Atropos (Planets)- who will each establish the fate of the individual. During the physical incarnation of the soul, the Deity is silent and invisible to most humans. However, a select few (such as Socrates) have possessed the ability to commune and converse with their own personal Deity.

Of course, Plato meant all of this allegorically. He refers to the Personal Deity as the "Daemon", which might also be translated "Intelligence" or "Genius." All of these are terms that indicate human consciousness- something that preoccupied men like Plato and Plotinus. As we see in the above, these men saw the Genius as a director and manifestor of the astrological forces of one's natal horoscope. The horoscope, in turn, was viewed as an indicator of the destiny and personality of the individual. Thus, the Genius was the embodiment of this destiny and personality- one's Fate.

By the time we reach the Neoplatonism of the medieval era, and such Hermetic texts as Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, we begin to see a highly refined concept of the Guardian Genius. Agrippa goes into detail on the concept in Book III, chapters 20-22. He describes the Genius as we have seen in Plato's *Republic*, and refers to it as the "Spirit of the Nativity." It descends "from the disposition of the world, and from the circuits of the stars which were powerful in one's nativity." Agrippa discusses at length the necessity of seeking out one's Genius via astrology, and doing everything possible to make one's life sympathetic with its nature. He even gives detailed instructions for finding the name of this Angel using one's own natal chart.

However, Agrippa also chose to present a more elaborate entity than Plato described. Holding to the threefold symbolism he uses throughout the *Three Books*, he postulates that there is a "Threefold Keeper of Man." The Genius of the Nativity is merely one of three Angels assigned to every human to guide and regulate their life. The Nativity Angel is the secondary keeper, followed by the "Angel of the Profession." This latter Angel changes each time you change professions. One's career will advance if the Angel of the Profession is in sympathy with the Genius, and it will flounder if the Angel of the Profession is in conflict with the Genius.

However, Agrippa takes a major departure from all of this when describing the first (and presumably highest) Keeper of the Soul:

The Holy Daemon is one, according to the doctrine of the Egyptians, assigned to the rational soul, not from the stars or planets, but from a supernatural cause, from God Himself, the president of Daemons, being universal, above nature.

The rest of the description of the Holy Daemon fits well enough with Plato's ideas. It directs and guides the life of the soul, and often goes unnoticed by the human it protects. It can be contacted via purification and living peaceably (I am reminded here of the six months described in Abramelin). Socrates is even mentioned as an example of one who has accomplished such a feat.

Agrippa's major departure comes from the suggestion that the Holy Daemon *is not* defined by the stars and planets, but is actually above nature itself (meaning above the zodiacal sphere)- directly with God. It is also interesting to point out that Agrippa claims an Egyptian origin for his Holy Daemon concept, while the usual horoscope-based Genius traces itself through ancient Greece to Babylon. Is this an indication that the entire idea is made-up?

Agrippa's claim of an Egyptian origin for the Holy Daemon turns out to be true. However, our exploration does not take us back to the Priests of Osiris and the builders of Pharaonic Pyramids. Instead, it takes us to Egypt after its Hellenization by the Greek Empire, under the governance of the Ptolemy family. It is here that we find that curious language known as "Coptic"- which is simply a melding of the Egyptian spoken tongue with the written characters of the Greek alphabet. It is here that we find the famous "Greek Magical Papyri"- which formed the basis of what would later be called Gnostic magick.

Gnostic Influence Upon the Holy Guardian Angel

The Gnostic school of mysticism was a result of the collision of cultures in Hellenistic Egypt. The ancient Egyptian mysteries met the philosophies (Pythagorean, Platonic) and Pagan mythologies of the Greeks, along with the mystical religion of the Jewish Essene camps in that part of the world. At the same time, an entire spectrum of philosophies and religions were pouring into places like Alexandria- such as Zoroastrianism, Stoicism, Neoplatonism and Hermeticism. Once the governance of Egypt eventually shifted from the Greeks to the Romans, we finally had the cultural matrix that led to the earliest forms of Christianity (such as Coptic Christianity and Gnosticism).

The Gnostics, though Biblically oriented, developed a very unique view of the universe and interpretation of Biblical scripture. This is likely due as much to their separatist mindset as to the unique mystical culture that surrounded them. For them, the God worshipped by the Jewish people was a blind and ignorant being- a lesser God posing as the Highest. The Angels, as well as the Gods worshipped in Pagan faiths, were nothing more than Archons (that is- Governors) charged by the pretender-God to maintain the Earth as a prison.

It fascinates me how similar the Gnostic philosophies are to Eastern teachings. For instance, the Gnostics believed in reincarnation. Human souls- trapped by the Archons- are forced to reincarnate in an endless cycle. Yet, the cycle is not maintained by the Archons! They are just opportunistic feeders upon the suffering of humankind. What actually keeps the Wheel going is human passion. It is human joy and suffering that keeps us bound here, and it is only through repose that freedom is gained. Repose is a Neoplatonic concept- and what it meant to the Gnostics was that only a mind free of the torments of the passions can gain freedom from the Wheel and entrance to Heaven. (Compare this to the Eastern ideas of Samsara, Nirvana, and the meditative clarity of mind it takes to get from one to the other.)

Before this point in history, most religions accepted a threefold division of the universe: the celestial realm above (where the stars, planets and Gods lived), the infernal realm below (where the dead, Gods of the dead, and various classes of demons lived), and the natural realm in between (where humans, animals, and nature spirits lived). However, the Gnostics had classed the entire celestial realm as the home of the Archons and the pretender-God. The reason for this is discovered when we take a look into their views on astrology.

The Gnostics were staunchly *anti*-astrology. Remember that all of the religions around them were deeply embedded in astrological concerns. Most of them, in fact, had developed as religious cults that worshipped various Planets in the forms of Deities. (The Jewish God did not fit that bill, but He did claim to be the leader and director of the Planetary Deities.) Of course, to the Gnostics, these were all Archons who wished only to prolong human suffering and increase their own power over humankind. Worst of all was the natal horoscope- that visual depiction of the relationship of the Archons to the soul at the time of birth. It represented- according to Plato- the very chain of Karma that binds a soul to the Wheel of Fate. It was the singular goal of the Gnostic to free himself from this Karmic chain, and thus from the Wheel of Fate.

In the end, this philosophy happens to leave some philosophical holes to fill. If God is not really the Highest, then Who is? If one can by-pass the celestial realm for "somewhere else", then what and where is this place? The Gnostic answer looks simple on the surface: beyond the planets and the fixed stars is the Fullness (*pleroma*)- the Mind of the Highest God. The Fullness is above nature because it is the source of nature. It is the home of the Aeons- which are a kind of super-Archangel- along with all of the archetypal blueprints for the things that would manifest in the celestial and physical realms. Unlike the lower realms, though, the Fullness rests in perfect Repose. No passions can exist there. Because of this, the beings of the Fullness have little to nothing to do with what happens here on Earth.

Yet, the Gnostic believed, as a fundamental aspect of his faith, that he was himself from the Fullness. The Gnostics regarded most humans as beyond saving from the Wheel of Fate, but they believed themselves to be essentially different. The Gnostics represented an elite minority of humans who each possessed a spark of Light from the Fullness. (The mythology concerning the descent of this Light from the Pleroma to Earth is long and complicated, and I cover it in depth in my essay *Gnosticism, History and Mythology*.)

According to some teachings, every Gnostic soul (Spark) here on earth has an Angelic double in the Fullness. This double is a kind of lesser Aeon, to whom that spark of Divine Light belongs. Using the language of classical philosophy, the Gnostics regarded the soul as a feminine being. It was the promised Bride to the masculine Angel above, each one waiting anxiously for the (re-)Union. (In modern terms, we would recognize the soul as the "Self" and the Angelic double as the "Higher Self.")

All of these elements come together to form a kind of mystical drama. The separated lovers, the hostile captors, and the quest to find a way home again. Yet, there is one final player in this drama- the one player who most directly relates to our own exploration of the Holy Guardian Angel. All at once He is the hope of the lovers, the redeemer from the captors, and the guiding light homeward. He is called the Christos.

The Christos is a most fascinating figure. It is the embodiment of the consciousness- or Intelligence- of the Highest God. While its home is within the Fullness, it does not manifest naturally from any of the Aeons. Instead, the Christos arises (unborn) from the Highest Source Itself. It rules over the Aeons, and is in fact credited with teaching Them the necessity of Repose. Even the Angelic "Higher Selves" in the Pleroma are the children of the Christos and the Aeon called Wisdom (*Sophia*).

Most importantly, however, the Christos is the Redeemer. It is His job to journey into the imperfect created realm, awaken the soul and remind it of its home, and finally to lead the soul to its reunion in

Heaven. Therefore, the Christos alone enjoys the special ability to cross at will the Great Barrier between the Fullness and the created world of the Archons.

This idea was certainly nothing new- especially to the Egyptians. Even the earliest shamanic religions recognized the cycles of the Planets and Stars as they passed above and below the horizon. To the ancient mind, these were the Gods moving between the celestial realm and the underworld. No living thing on earth- with the notable exception of the Shaman- possessed the power to come and go at will between life and death. The Sun, especially, was noted for its daily trips into the underworld- where it was supposed He judged among the dead during the night much as He judged among the living while in the sky. We find this pattern in such places as Sumeria, Babylon, and Egypt.

Coming from Egypt, it is no surprise that some Osirian symbolism found its way into the Gnostic conception of the Christos. Osiris, Pharaoh of the Gods, was worshipped as a dying and rising Solar Deity. His sacred mythology reflects the waxing and waning of the Sun through the year. Therefore, it was His ability to move between, and rule over, both the celestial and infernal realms that made him interesting to the Gnostics. His name is often invoked in the Greek Magical Papyri, and He is strongly related to the Christos.

Yet, for all of this adopted Solar symbolism, it is important to remember that the Gnostic Christos *is not* equated with the Sun. Quite the contrary, it is the Sun- in all of its majesty and brilliance- that is regarded as a mere imperfect copy of the Glory of the Christos. The Fullness is the true home of the Christos, well above the heavenly sphere of the Sun and, in fact, all of created nature.

Well! All of that is quite a mouthful for one simple reference Agrippa makes to "the Egyptians" in his work. While the actual Gnostic school of philosophy was all but extinct in the medieval era, many of its foundational concepts lived on in both the Christian and Jewish mystical texts of the period. Thus, the influence of Gnostic thought is apparent in the description Agrippa gives his Aeon-like "Holy Daemon." It is a holy creature from above nature (as opposed to the Genuis), who speaks to us when we find Repose, and leads us ever closer to spiritual perfection.

The Christ/Christos symbolism remains apparent and strong in Abramelin's Holy Guardian Angel as well. Like Agrippa, Abraham the Jew insists that Repose is of paramount importance if one wishes to hear and speak to the Guardian Angel. The function of the Angel is also the same- to lead one to sacred perfection. Plus, Abramelin utilizes the Solar imagery we know descends from both Osirian and Christian mysteries.

However, the Gnostic stance against astrology is preserved in the *Book of Abramelin*. While direct historical connections between Gnostic literature and this manuscript are unknown, the attitudes toward astrology conveyed in the first part of Book II, Ch. 6 (Concerning the Planetary Hours and Other Errors of the Astrologers) are a shockingly accurate portrayal of Gnostic concepts:

It is true that the Wise in Astrology do write of the Stars and of their movements, and that these attaining thereto do produce divers effects in inferior and elemental things... But that they should have power over the Spirits, or force in all super-natural things, that is not, neither can ever be.

But it will instead be found that by the permission of the Great God it is the Spirits who govern the firmament. What foolishness then would it be to implore the favour of the Sun, of the Moon, and of the Stars, when the object would be to have converse with Angels...

This indicates that- as with the Christos- it is doubtful the Guardian Angel is intended to *equate* with the Sun, nor to reside within the Solar Sphere.

There are more Gnostic influences throughout Abramelin. For instance, the text speaks of gaining "Knowledge" (*gnosis*) of the Angel as well as Conversation- implying a spiritual marriage between aspirant and Guardian rather than a simple summoning ceremony. Even aspects of the magickal procedure used during the seven days can be found in the Greek Magical Papyri- although this is unsurprising in a grimoiric text. Sadly, space prohibits me from exploring this subject further.

Before we move past this issue, I would like to bring your attention to one more philosophical gem hidden in Agrippa's description of the Guardian Angel. His chapter on the subject in his *Occult Philosophy* (Book III, Ch. 22) is entitled "That there is a Threefold Keeper of Man..." The text proceeds, as we have seen, to describe the three Angelic Daemons as separate entities. Yet, I find it interesting that the chapter title makes no reference to the "...Three Keepers of Man." Instead, we have what appears to be a reference to a single- yet threefold- entity. Given Agrippa's faithfulness to the symbolism of the Holy Trinity throughout his *Three Books*, this seems to be a likely interpretation of Agrippa's intent. Suddenly our Three Daemons become three different faces of a single Holy Guardian Angel.

The Hermetic HGA

As we near the end of this essay, I want to present a short Qabalistic analysis of the Holy Guardian Angel. If you have read about the HGA previously, you have more than likely read something influenced by Golden Dawn or Thelemic philosophies- both of which make heavy use of the language of Hermetic Qabalah to explain the nature and function of the Angel. I will do the same here, though it will be in the light of the philosophies we have discussed above.

The Qabalah is a Judaic form of mysticism that adopted much from the various schools of Gnosticism. The Fullness, for example, was adopted and called *Olam haAtziluth* (the World of Archetypes); the Aeons became the *Sephiroth* (from the book *Sepher Yetzirah*); and the Highest God they termed the *Ain* (Nothingness) or *Ain Soph* (Limitlessness). However, the Archons remain absent from the Qabalah. Instead, the Creator God of Genesis is merely the Highest God acting as Creator. The Angelic hosts, while they are certainly charged with maintaining physical reality, are not generally considered prison wardens who feed upon human suffering.

By the time of the Hermetic Qabalah of the Golden Dawn and Thelema, all of this had been mapped out upon the standard ("Kircher") Tree of Life. The Supernal Spheres of the Tree represented the Fullness of *Atziluth*, followed by the Planetary Spheres ruled by the Angelic choirs, and finally ending in the physical Kingdom of *Malkuth*.

The human soul, too, had been applied to the Tree of Life pattern (that which is below reflecting that which is above). The Supernals here represented the Higher Self (or *Neschemah*) of an individual, while the Planetary Spheres collectively made the rational soul (or *Ruach*).

Modern Hermeticism usually interprets the HGA as the Higher Self. Many ceremonies intended to establish conversation with the Guardian Angel are designed as Qabalistic invocations of the Supernals. By opening the Supernal Spheres within one's own aura, it throws open a line of communication between the *Neschemah* and *Ruach*- allowing the Higher Self to speak to the Self. Because it is indeed the function of the HGA to transmit the True Will from the Higher to the rational soul, this "HGA as Supernals" formula works in a practical sense.

However, based on what we have learned previously, we know that the Higher Self- or Angelic Double- resides always in the Fullness in perfect Repose. Even the Qabalah preserves this- because the Supernals (*Neschemah*) do not cross the Great Barrier to enter the lower Spheres of the Tree. Meanwhile, the spiritual aspirant possesses a Divine Spark that belongs to the Higher Self, and the two long for reunification with one another.

Meanwhile, , it is just as common to see the HGA associated with the Solar Sphere of the Tree- called *Tiphareth* (Majesty). Here once again we see the common relationship assumed between the Guardian Angel and the Sun. Even the Abramelin Rite, especially with its death-rebirth ritual drama, might be classed as a *Tipharethic* initiation ceremony. Hermetic rituals for the HGA often focus upon Tiphareth, because this is the heart of the *Ruach* and the specific point where contact is made between the Higher Self and the rational soul. From this perspective, the HGA might seem to "live" in *Tiphareth*. To be more specific, however, the Solar Sphere is merely where one first encounters the HGA. *Tiphareth* represents within the Qabalah the mid-point between gross and spiritual, where man and Divine meet as one. It is merely one station in a longer journey.

As we can see, the concept of the HGA tends to be a bit slippery in Hermetic philosophy. Our predecessors like Crowley and Mathers tended to jump from one extreme to another when discussing the subject. In one place, the Guardian is described as a metaphor for the Higher Self, and in another the author insists the HGA is an objective Intelligence. Sometimes there is no distinction made between the Genius and the HGA. Other times the entire Guardian Angel concept is dumped into the sphere of *Tiphareth* and forgotten about entirely.

None of this is helped by the fact that no literature has ever definitively established the Guardian's membership in any Angelic Order. The closest we have are references to the "Guardian Angels" (such as in *Abramelin*) or other inferences that the HGAs form an Order of Their own. It also seems that Plato and Agrippa hint at the same thing- as if the Guardian Angels are held in reserve somewhere awaiting assignment to human souls. Add to this the Guardian's special relationship to the force of the Christos, and we are left with an entity that truly stands outside of the hierarchies of nature. He is under the authority of no Archangel- presumably answering to God alone. He is, in fact, a direct manifestation of the Divine Spark within each of us- the *Shekinah* (Presence of God).

The Holy Guardian Angel is a dynamic creature. He is the Redeemer who travels freely between Heaven and Earth to guide the soul to the place "which has been prepared." He is the Messenger bearing the news of the True Will from the *Neschemah* to the *Ruach*, and our prayers from the heart to the Supernal Fullness.

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